

# Funding Völkerrechtsblog

## The German national research funding organization DFG will support Völkerrechtsblog in the coming years

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Since its inception in 2014, *Völkerrechtsblog* has been run by dedicated volunteers who spent countless hours of their spare time, and sometimes even their own money, on the blog. As workload and expectations have been growing, the time has come to secure more sustainable funding and to further professionalize the blog. We are thus happy to announce that [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft](#) (DFG), the German national research funding organization, has awarded funding to the blog for the coming three years. The grant from the funding line [“Infrastructure for Electronic Publications and Digital Scholarly Communication”](#) will allow us to improve our services for the international law community and to create a paid position for a managing editor. This will enable the blog to offer an even greater variety of openly accessible contributions, from more places around the world, covering a broader range of topics and reaching a larger audience.

### ***The history of Völkerrechtsblog***

You might remember our early days: *Völkerrechtsblog* [started off](#) in spring 2014 as a small project initiated by a group of PhD students in the field of international law. It emerged from the Arbeitskreis junger Völkerrechtswissenschaftlerinnen (AjV; Working Group of Young International Law Scholars), an informal network of younger scholars with an interest in questions of international law from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and beyond (see also [here](#)). The idea of founding a blog was to use the new opportunities and spaces the internet offered also for international legal scholarship.

One of the main motivations was that legal scholarship remained enclosed in national contexts. Although the subject matters of international legal scholarship are by definition transnational, the current publication market with its copyright restrictions and paywalls still hampers a truly global scholarly communication. The resulting exclusion particularly of scholars from less well-endowed research institutions is not only a problem for the purported universality of international law and its legitimacy, but also for the advancement of academic knowledge. The medium “blog” offers solutions: It is a low-threshold and easy-to-handle medium that creates opportunities for exchange with a potentially global audience (see on this also [here](#)). Not surprisingly, blogs are hailed as Open Access pioneers in science generally, and as a [silver lining](#) in the otherwise Open Access sceptical legal academia.

The project *Völkerrechtsblog* thus started with the aim to provide new spaces for discussion and to offer a platform for new and unconventional ideas and formats. Contributions on the blog are shorter than in traditional journal articles and freer in style. At the same time, we are rigorous when it comes to scientific standards: *Völkerrechtsblog* in particular understands itself as a scientific blog which claims to participate in and shape the discussions in the professional community. For that purpose, the publication process includes a slim peer review and a thorough edit by the editorial team.

### ***Reaching readers around the globe – a success that has its price***

Nearly five years after its launch, it is fair to say that *Völkerrechtsblog* is a success story. We have published hundreds of posts in three different languages. *Völkerrechtsblog* became a voice in many debates on international law, but also sets new topics and opens new debates (see only two of our recent symposia on “[Critical Race Perspectives on International Law](#)” and “[Cultural Heritage in a Post-Colonial World](#)”). Some of our contributors are at the beginning of their careers, maybe even publish their first piece on *Völkerrechtsblog*; others belong to the most established voices in their fields (c.f. also our recent interviews with [B.S. Chimni](#) and [Armin von Bogdandy](#)).

What is of particular importance to us is that *Völkerrechtsblog* reaches readers around the globe: Our internal statistics show that people from 180 countries read the blog. This overwhelming number not only confirms that there is indeed a demand for openly accessible knowledge and transnational debate. It also suggests that our recipe works and that *Völkerrechtsblog* managed to establish itself as a platform for scholarly communication in the digital age.

However, the success affects the way *Völkerrechtsblog* works and is organized – it is not farfetched to say that the blog somewhat became victim of its own success. Having started as a small project working on a purely voluntary basis with few formal structures, the changed circumstances now require the adjustment of the working methods. Despite the fact that those who are involved in the work of the blog spend hundreds of hours of work every year, the workload has become increasingly difficult to manage. We were lucky enough to secure some funding from the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg and the German Association of International Law in the past, which enabled us to pay for the website and travel expenses and to outsource some programming tasks. However, working for the blog has increasingly required specialized expertise – ranging from IT and programming know-how via design and bibliographical expertise to legal experience concerning licensing, Open Access, data protection and agreements with our cooperation partners. Finally, increasing the number of volunteers in the team has structural limits, as it generates new work in terms of coordination, knowledge management and workflow adaptation.

### ***The grant and changes ahead***

Given these challenges, the team decided to apply for a longer-term grant from the DFG funding line “[Infrastructure for Electronic Publications and Digital Scholarly](#)

[Communication](#)” in cooperation with the Max Planck Institute in Heidelberg, whose support we gratefully acknowledge. A core concern was to create a permanent position for a managing editor who would coordinate the team of volunteers and relieve them from some of the more specialized tasks. Besides the position, the grant will fund a technical and design update of the blog, academic events on Open Access and global knowledge production, and some other minor expenses.

The idea behind this step is not to fundamentally reshape *Völkerrechtsblog*, but to solidify and expand it. Many of the changes will concern the internal workflow and the backend of the blog – which our readers and contributors will only notice, hopefully, by an even smoother review and publication process. Another goal of the reform is to extend the collaborations and networks and especially to further open up the discursive space towards the Global South. We would like to intensify our partnerships with established and new legal journals in and beyond Europe. We also intend to do more outreach work towards both our established constituencies, starting with the *AjV*, and towards new audiences. One important goal furthermore is to participate more actively in debates on scholarly communication and publication formats in the digital age. The grant will allow us to contribute to and shape the transition towards Open Access publishing also in legal academia and to bring in the perspectives and needs of international legal scholarship.

***Your input is important to us – get involved in the reform process!***

Before we engage in the reform process, we would like to engage in a dialogue with you, our readers, and hear your opinions about your wishes and your ideas for enhancing the blog. For that purpose, please use the online survey tool which we will create on this blog in the near future or send us an e-mail to [intlawblog@gmail.com](mailto:intlawblog@gmail.com). We highly appreciate your input and are eager to include it as good as possible in the reform process, so please share your ideas, thoughts and suggestions with us!

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